



BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT

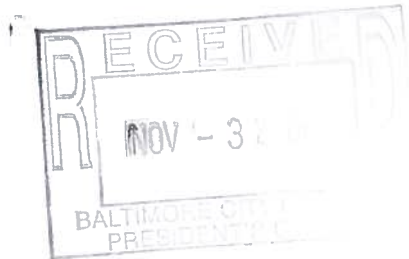


Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Mayor

Kevin Davis
Police Commissioner

November 3, 2015

Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
Room 400, City Hall
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202



Attention: Natawna Austin, Executive Secretary

**Re: City Council Bill No. 15-0252R
Request for State Action – Baltimore City Police Commission**

Dear Council President Young and Members of the City Council:

The Baltimore Police Department (BPD or the Department) has reviewed Council Bill 15-0252R. This resolution requests that the Maryland General Assembly enact legislation authorizing Baltimore City to establish a Police Commission to oversee the BPD. The Department takes no position on this resolution.

BPD agrees with the intent of this resolution, which is to improve the relationship and trust between the police and community. In fact, the Department has launched a number of initiatives intended to build a lasting bridge between the police and community, including the Police Explorers Program, the Police Commissioner’s Summer Camp, the Police Commissioner’s Youth Basketball League, and a partnership with the literacy non-profit Reading Partners. The Department has also recently announced that it will be reviving the “Officer Friendly” program, intended to create positive interactions and mentorship opportunities between police officers and Baltimore’s young people.

The Department is also planning a number of changes to improve community policing in the BPD. One such change is to re-establish “posts” within the Department’s staffing models. Posts will allow officers to work the same “beat” each shift, so that they have the opportunity to build a relationship with the communities they serve. The Department is also developing new curriculums to be taught to police trainees at the BPD Academy. First, a “History of Baltimore” curriculum is in development to create a unique way of learning about the culture of Baltimore. Recruits will be hearing from leaders representing all of the diverse communities and institutions of Baltimore. The Department is also developing a “Foot Patrol” curriculum. Foot Patrol is the bedrock of effective community policing. Instructors will teach the “art” of foot patrol, emphasizing concepts and skills such as interpersonal communication and emotional intelligence. The Department believes each of the aforementioned programs or initiatives will help restore trust between BPD officers and the citizens they serve.

Specific to the proposal in Council Bill 15-0252R, the Department would note that changing the structure of the Department so that it is overseen by a Commission would be a major change to the structure of the Department. The Department is open to bold ideas for reform, but hopes that such a restructuring would be done only after careful consideration and input from the community. As the City Council knows, the Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division is currently conducting a pattern or practice investigation into the

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No position

BPD. The DOJ is investigating many aspects of the Department, including efforts on community engagement, community policing, and civilian oversight. As a result of this investigation, the DOJ will be recommending a number of reforms, many of which are likely to be significant in nature. The Council should be aware that DOJ consent decrees in other major police departments have included a civilian oversight component. Rather than advocating for a specific change this Legislative Session, the Department believes it is better to wait for the results of the DOJ investigation and any recommendations regarding civilian oversight.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. The Department looks forward to working with the City Council on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. G. Vetter', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Andrew G. Vetter
Director of Government Affairs